

EAST 79TH STREET NEIGHBORHOOD  
ASSOCIATION GOES TO WASHINGTON!

(By Deborah de Bauernfeind)

On Tuesday, October 19, 1999, 11 members of the Association embarked on a two-day trip to Washington, DC. The Association works closely with elected officials on quality-of-life issues, transportation matters, building preservation, and zoning regulations. We were particularly interested in getting a first-hand feel for how Congress works. To accomplish this, our Congresswoman, Carolyn Maloney, met with our group in a Rayburn House Office Building Hearing Room for a 30-minute discussion of our issues. Assisted by a note-taking staff member, Congresswoman Maloney fielded our questions and concerns regarding the Second Avenue Subway; the inadequacies of our bus service; our zoning battle to keep East 76th Street and other midblocks under R8B, requiring low density and low height; the rising cost of health insurance; and the necessity of maintaining rent control and rent stabilization laws. Following a productive discussion, we were privileged to sit in the Visitor's Gallery of the House of Representatives where we heard the Congresswoman from Hawaii discuss the gender equity bill, sponsored by Congresswoman Maloney. We also sat in the Visitor's Gallery of the United States Senate Chamber. We heard a portion of the debate on the bill outlawing "partial birth" abortions, which was passed the next day.

Congresswoman Maloney's office arranged for us to have a tour of the Capitol Building that afternoon. What a thrill it was to walk through the labyrinth of Minton-tiled corridors, rubbing shoulders with legislators who have the ability to change the course of history. While the legislators deal with our Nation's future, the history of our country abounds in every corner of the Capitol Building. Congress has been housed there since 1800. The current chamber of the House was completed in 1857, and the current Senate chamber was completed in 1859. One can feel the presence of John Adams in the National Statuary Hall. The House used to meet in the space. The acoustical design allowed Adams to sit in one area of the hall and listen to conversations on the opposite end of the room while he acted as though he was dozing. It kept him well informed! The cast-iron dome of the Capitol was completed in 1863. It weighs about nine million pounds. No building in Washington, DC is allowed to be higher than the Statue of Freedom, which tops the dome. The Rotunda is the heart of the Capitol. Prominent Americans have lain in state there, including Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy. A frieze depicting over 400 years of American history encircles the Rotunda. In addition, there are eight paintings covering the discovery and colonization of America, as well as illustrations of scenes from the American Revolution.

Our day concluded with dinner in the Congressional Dining Room. Arranged by Association President Betty Cooper Wallerstein, we were seated at a table set for 11 and were pampered by the dining room staff. Several members of Congress came to our table to introduce themselves. It was a wonderful way to end our stay.

The five-hour bus ride back to New York City provided ample time for us to reflect on everything we saw. It's difficult to determine which sight was the most compelling. The sense of history is everywhere. Being on the steps of the Capitol where Presidential Inaugurations have taken place since 1801 or being in the East Room at the White House and seeing Gilbert Stuart's 1797 portrait of George Washington, which has hung in the White House since 1800—both experiences are

moving. And, being told that Civil War troops were quartered in the East Room makes the space seem quite alive. The corridors of the White House are lined with portraits of Presidents and First Ladies. The last portrait one sees when leaving is of John F. Kennedy, our slain President, with his head bowed. Memories abound. On the White House grounds is a magnolia planted by Andrew Jackson. George Washington selected the site for the White House, and it was Thomas Jefferson who began the tradition of opening the White House to the public each morning. It's exciting to be beneficiaries of this practice, but it was the Congressional letter from Congresswoman Maloney that admitted us since White House functions the morning we went restricted visitation.

Memorials dot the Washington landscape. We toured six of them in the evening light, which provided a meditative atmosphere. At the Lincoln Memorial one is reminded of his legacy to freedom while reading inscriptions of the Gettysburg Address and Lincoln's Second Inaugural. The Thomas Jefferson Memorial highlights his beliefs in human liberty. And, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, comprised of four outdoor galleries, includes Roosevelt's words of courage and optimism etched in red South Dakota granite. But, it is at the war memorials where one is vividly reminded of the blood shed by individuals to uphold freedom around the world. Inlaid in silver in a granite wall near the Pool of Remembrance at the Korean War Veterans Memorial are the words "Freedom Is Not Free". Life-size sculptures of soldiers surrounding the 60-foot flagstaff at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial contrast the soldiers' youth with the weapons of war which they hold, underscoring their level of sacrifice. And, tension and valor can be felt in the depiction of the men raising the American flag on Iwo Jima. But, their victory was short-lived. Three soon died in combat.

Our "responsibilities as citizens of a democracy" continued to be reflected upon during our visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. It was a solemn and emotional experience. One hopes the eternal flame of remembrance will preserve the memory and encourage reflection "upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust".

The Association went to Washington to get a feel for the workings of government and for a dialogue with Congresswoman Maloney. We came away with a feeling that there are channels for our opinions. We also felt a tingle of pride in being Americans. The struggle for freedom and the preservation of it to this day is so evident in our Nation's Capitol. Our trip experiences reminded us that this legacy to freedom is one of the most enduring birthrights Americans possess.

TRIBUTE TO MR. RICHARD L.  
KOWALLIK OF MADISON, ALA-  
BAMA

HON. ROBERT E. (BUD) CRAMER, JR.

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 26, 2000

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Mr. Richard Kowallik of Madison County, Alabama for his many years of outstanding service to the U.S. military and his community. On the occasion of his retirement from the United States Army Space and Missile Defense Command, I stand today to applaud his 34 years of loyal service.

Mr. Kowallik has risen through the ranks of the SMDC currently serving as Division Chief for the Acquisition Management Division of the Contracting and Acquisition Management Office. He has achieved distinction in his field as he is a member and a fellow of the National Contract Management Association and a certified professional contract manager of the National Contract Management Association.

A native of Indiana, Mr. Kowallik has made Alabama his home and will remain there after his retirement. He has taken an active role in his community serving on the Board of Directors for the Optimist Club and Ducks Unlimited and I imagine during his well-deserved "rest" he will continue to be a leader in civic organizations.

I join his family, his wife Dee, his daughter Tammy, his son-in-law Steve and grandsons Tyler and Cameron, friends and co-workers in congratulating him on a job well done. On behalf of the people of Alabama's 5th Congressional district, I want to express my gratitude to Richard for his extraordinary service to our community and our nation.

CONGRATULATING THE MEMBERS  
OF BRAVO COMPANY, 1ST BAT-  
TALION, 186TH INFANTRY, OR-  
EGON ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

HON. GREG WALDEN

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 26, 2000

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the members of Bravo Company, part of the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry of the Oregon Army National Guard, who just returned from service in the Middle East as part of Operation Southern Watch.

The 115 members of Bravo Company have completed 180 days of service in support of the NATO peacekeeping mission in southwest Asia. Deployed to aid in the mission of the United States Army Forces Central Command—Saudi Arabia, these citizen soldiers of Oregon served with the dedication that Americans have come to expect from those who wear the uniform of our armed forces.

The deployment of the soldiers of Bravo Company marks the first time a combat infantry unit from the Oregon Army National Guard has been called to service since World War II. Like their predecessors, they performed their duties with a firm understanding of the gravity of their mission and a sense of devotion that would make any unit proud.

Bravo Company follows a long line of dedicated Oregonians who have served their nation in the armed forces both at home and abroad. The members of this outstanding outfit have continued that tradition proudly and without reservation. As they return to the lives they left behind when they answered their country's call, each of these soldiers can do so with the satisfaction that comes after a job well done.

On behalf of a nation grateful for their service, I'm proud to say welcome home to the members of Bravo Company.